

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

DRAFT *el7*
RELEASED IN FULL

Exchange of Views on Transnational Issues:
International Terrorism

“ASEAN and the Global War on Terrorism”

18th U.S.-ASEAN Dialogue
June 28, 2005
Washington, D.C.

Karen Aguilar
Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism
Department of State

Introduction

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to be here today at this 18th U.S.-ASEAN Dialogue to discuss the Global War on Terror and how the United States is working with ASEAN member countries to end the scourge of terrorism.

Following the September 11 attacks, the United States has maintained that any person or government that supports, protects, or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent, and will be held to account. Our National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, published in February 2003, provides the policy framework for coordinated actions to prevent terrorist attacks against the United States, its citizens, its interests, and its friends

around the world and, ultimately, to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists and their supporters.

We have implemented this strategy to act simultaneously on four fronts:

- We must **defeat** terrorist organizations of global reach by attacking their sanctuaries, leadership, finances, and command, control and communications;
- We must **deny** further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists by cooperating with other states to take action against these international threats;
- We must **diminish** the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on the areas most at risk; and
- We must **defend** the United States, its citizens, and interests at home and abroad.

The National Strategy highlights that success will come only through the sustained, steadfast, and systematic application of all elements of national power, including diplomatic, financial, law enforcement, intelligence, and military.

Since September 11, 2001, more than three-quarters of al-Qaida's senior leadership and more than 3,400 lower-level al-Qaida operatives or associates have been detained or killed in over 100 countries, including Bali bombing mastermind Hambali, largely as a result of cooperation among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. A global dragnet has tightened around al-Qaida, made possible by a broad coalition of 84 nations, all focused on the common goal of eradicating the terrorist threat that endangers all civilized nations.

An Evolving Threat

Despite our significant successes in going after al-Qaida, the terrorist threat is evolving and presenting serious challenges in Asia. The Southeast in particular continues to be an attractive theater of operations for terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiya and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Southeast Asian governments have been reliable partners in the war on terrorism, but they face tremendous challenges in dealing with the terrorist threat. They are also paying a price in blood shed and lives lost, as the region has faced ongoing terrorist threats on several fronts. In February 2004, the Philippines suffered the worst terrorist attack in its history when a bomb planted by the Abu Sayyaf Group sunk SuperFerry 14, killing approximately 130

passengers. In September 2004, a car bomb was detonated in front of the Australian Embassy in Indonesia killing 10 and wounding nearly 200. More recently, on Valentine's Day of this year, we witnessed deadly devastation as terrorists detonated three bombs nearly simultaneously in three different cities of the Philippines.

Despite this troubled security environment, we are making progress. We have a robust Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program throughout the region, which has helped local law enforcement pursue terrorists more effectively. In 2003, thanks in part to ATA, Thai authorities captured Hambali, JI's operations chief and the al-Qaida chief in Southeast Asia. In the Philippines, the Philippine National Police have thwarted plots in Manila and arrested suspected members of JI and the Abu Sayyaf Group, using skills and techniques acquired through ATA. In Indonesia, we implemented an eight million dollar program to train and equip a specialized counterterrorism unit within the Indonesian National Police, called Special Detachment 88. This unit has significantly contributed to the arrests and prosecution of members of JI, the group responsible for the bombings at Bali, the Marriott, and most likely the Australian Embassy. In Thailand and the Philippines, we are also working to stop terrorists at border entry points

by providing training and computer equipment to establish a name-check database called the Terrorist Interdiction Program.

Because terrorism in Southeast Asia is a regional problem, we also work in a regional context to provide counterterrorism assistance. Through centers like the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism in Malaysia and the US-Thailand International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok, we are providing counterterrorism training to law enforcement officers throughout the region. The Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Coopération presents another valuable venue for cooperative training in the region.

By working closely with Asian nations, we are making consistent progress towards increasing their capabilities to fight terrorism and prevent the region from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists.

Solutions through ASEAN

It increasingly clear that eradicating terrorism in Asia will demand the commitment of a host of countries in the region. The United States is working closely with the ten member countries of ASEAN and through the

ASEAN Regional Forum to enhance counterterrorism cooperation. The ASEAN community has vigorously supported expansion of regional counterterrorism capacities as envisioned in the 2001 ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism, and the US-ASEAN Counterterrorism Work Plan is the blueprint for US engagement on this effort. ASEAN members have reached out to neighboring countries to expand cooperation in areas of information exchange and law enforcement cooperation, as well as increasing counterterrorism finance and law enforcement capacity-building efforts through training and education.

The future of US-ASEAN cooperation on counterterrorism looks bright. At the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting earlier this month, US and ASEAN officials agreed on a series of steps to move forward with practical implementation of the US-ASEAN Counterterrorism Work Plan, focusing on new areas of cooperation in Information Sharing, Enhancing Liaison Relationships, Capacity Building, and Transportation, Border, and Immigration Control. Four projects in these areas were proposed and agreed upon for implementation within the next 12 months:

- (1) Counterterrorism Consultant: The US will sponsor a short term consultant to work with ASEAN secretariat officials to develop project proposals specifically related to ASEAN's counterterrorism goals. We are currently seeking appropriate candidates from ASEAN countries and hope to quickly get this project off the ground;
- (2) Sponsoring a Rewards Seminar: The US, in partnership with ASEAN, will host a two-day seminar focused on establishing, managing and administering a rewards program to facilitate criminal and terrorist investigations and prosecutions;
- (3) Addressing the critical problem of Cash Couriers: We will hold a week-long training workshop on countering cash couriers and bulk cash transfers, one of the main methods of financing terrorism in Southeast Asia;
- (4) Enhancing maritime security through Maritime Domain Awareness: With support from the U.S. Coast Guard, we will host a two-day seminar focusing on operational details of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

We were pleased by the profitable discussions at the SOMTC and the agreement on these four projects. We look forward to continued work together with ASEAN — both on these projects and in other areas of counterterrorism cooperation, in the coming year.

Conclusion

The scope of the terrorist threat makes clear that no one country can hope to succeed in fighting the war against it alone. As President Bush has stressed on numerous occasions, the global threat we face requires a global strategy and a global response — and this is exactly what we are seeking to do, both bilaterally with our partners, and by coordinating with ASEAN and other international organizations to fight terrorism in every corner of the globe. We are fortunate to have so many close and reliable partners in Asia; cooperation has been forthcoming, and rapid response to immediate threats the norm.

Terrorists in Asia have proven their resilience, but our successes everyday mean that they are spending more and more time looking over their shoulders. To win the global war against this threat, we must and will continue to work closely together to address the challenges before us and to build on our many successes.

Thank you.